



**GOVERNMENT OF
THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES**

VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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PRESS RELEASE

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Health Department Holds Territory's First Health Equity Summit

US Virgin Islands — Under the leadership of Governor Albert Bryan, Jr., and Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach, the V.I. Department of Health (DOH) held the territory's first Health Equity Summit to widen the dialogue between health officials and community partners about long-term solutions to health disparities in the territory, as well as to introduce its newly established Office of Health Equity.

The initial segment of the Health Equity Summit was held on Tuesday, November 29, on St. Croix. The conversation will continue Friday, December 2, on St. Thomas, and will feature panel discussions between the Department of Health officials and key community organizations that work every day to care for the USVI's underserved population. The keynote speaker of each event is Dr. Noreen Michael, Research Director/Research Associate Professor, and Interim Director at the University of the Virgin Islands' Caribbean Exploratory Research Center.

"The Virgin Islands Department of Health is constantly seeking to advance awareness and understanding of the public health implications of health disparities and this summit is a significant step toward that goal," said Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion. "The need for collaboration and innovation to improve and maintain population health is especially critical now because, at the same time, the rising burden of chronic diseases is posing a challenge for our health system." The events serve to bring our "Partners" in the fight for health equity together with plans to incorporate the ideas into an updated 2030 Community Health Improvement Plan.

During the summit, the VI Department of Health will also present its new Office of Health Equity made possible through a Center for Disease Control's grant. The grant is part of the

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CDC's Health Disparities Program initiative to address COVID-19 health disparities among populations at high-risk and underserved, including racial and ethnic minority populations and rural communities.

The summit will be livestreamed at [www.Facebook.com/virginislandsDOH](https://www.facebook.com/virginislandsDOH) and broadcast on Government Access Channel 27.

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